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Trends. Is Saddam Hussein Dead?

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Abstract: This Trends article discusses how we might know whether Saddam Hussein is dead, as well as his significance in the ongoing political narrative in Iraq.

The psychology of this question bears on our *schadenfreude*; our identification, projection, projective identification, and transference relationships with someone we have never met; our estimates of death's political import; and resonance with entertaining narrative bordering on the mythic and archetypal. But from an intelligence perspective, here's how one might seek to answer it through combining data sources.

Technical Intelligence. One might analyze data obtained through technological devices that allow hearing credible sources--e.g., statements that he is alive or dead including Saddam's own voice suggesting his health status. Or devices that allow seeing anything which has implications for his being alive or dead--e.g., his body, a burial ritual, or mourning behavior among those expected to mourn. Or, in addition, devices that allow hearing and seeing events suggestive of Saddam being alive or dead--e.g., someone else seeming to be in charge, courses of action being taken that seemingly never would occur if Saddam were alive, or business as usual suggesting he is still alive.

Human Intelligence. One might analyze data obtained through credible human sources directly or indirectly reporting to intelligence officers on any of the above.

Physical Intelligence. One might analyze relevant physical data such as samples of what might be Saddam's body tissue or what might be his actual body--corroborated through forensic means.

But it might be more interesting to contemplate on Saddam's life and eventual death. Both life and death will be seized on to create narratives and myths supporting the interests of various political actors: military victors and the vanquished, opponents who will continue to face off in matters of life and death. In that sense, Saddam will never die. (See Black, J. (2002). The murder of memory: Freud, Moses, and the death of Rabin. *Mortality*, 7, 83-95; Gordillo, G. (2002). The breath of the devils: Memories and places of an experience of terror. *American Ethnologist*, 29, 33-57; Sugar, M. (2002). Commonalities between the Isaac and Oedipus myths: A speculation. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis*, 30, 691-706; Undrill, G. (2001). What remains of Oedipus? Part objects beyond the pleasure principle. *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 17, 372-381.) (Keywords: Death, Epistemology, Intelligence, Iraq, Political Narrative, Saddam Hussein)